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ABSTRACT

Intended for parents of exceptional children, the paper presents a model for bringing a child's undesirable behavior at home under control with a minimum of time and effort. The major component of the model is the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record (PCAR), which lists five behaviors: "I followed all directions given to me on the first command," "I said only nice things," "I showed respect for others," "I was in bed by 8:00 each school night," and "I completed all my chores." Directions for using the PCAR are outlined and the main points to include in a family discussion introducing the program are discussed. Options for dealing with a child who breaks one of the five specified rules are given. Guidelines for a time out area are given, and a sample PCAR form is included. (SW)

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Child Management: A Simplified System for Parents of Exceptional Children

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Child Management: A Simplified System for Parents of Exceptional Children

Parents of exceptional children are frequently faced with the problem of undesirable behaviors at home. The model of child management to be described can bring a child's undesirable behavior at home under control with a minimum of time and effort. Children of different ages, races, and exceptionality respond to the technique presented in the model.

All parents change children's behavior. This is done by allowing some behaviors to occur, preventing others, and punishing still others. If parents are consistent in their response to behavior, they become more effective behavior managers and parents. McLaughlin (1979) pointed out that all parents must be effective behavior managers as part of the parenting process. O'Dell (1974) reviewed programs where parents learned to use behavior management techniques at home, with varying success.

Research has shown that parents can successfully reduce undesirable behavior (Christopherson, 1972; Cooper & Edge, 1981; Gordon, 1970; Hawkins, Peterson, Schweid & Bijou, 1966; Lewis, 1967; Wahler, 1964). Token economies and behavioral contracting are among the behavioral

strategies that have been used (Dardig & Heward, 1976; Heward, Dardig & Rossett, 1979; Patterson, 1975).

Many programs for managing children's behavior are too complicated for parents to use consistently. Most programs involve many hours of parental training. Many of the programs are too sophisticated for parents of exceptional children. Some parents are resistant to attending extended training sessions, reading training manuals, and keeping records.

The model described here is a simplified system of child management designed to meet the needs of this special parent population and their children. The major component of the model is the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record, PCAR.

The following features of the model make it practical for managing the behavior of exceptional children in the home:

1. only a few hours required for training parents to use the PCAR,

2. it is applicable to all types of children and families,

3. it is not expensive in time or money,

4. the PCAR can be individualized for simultaneous behavior programs,

5. children help develop the reinforcement system, and

6. parents can become active in supporting a positive home environment with the cooperation of their children.

The Model

The model uses a simple grid with specific behaviors. (See Appendix A.) These behaviors specified on the PCAR appear to have the most impact on overall desirable behavior. This simplified grid enables parents to use the principles of positive reinforcement, response cost, and time out in a consistent manner. This avoids negative responses, such as shouting, which have frequently been associated with child management in the home.

Explanation of Behaviors

The behaviors on the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record were selected because they cover a wide range of areas pertinent to responsible child management. A brief explanation of each behavior follows.

1. I followed all directions given to me on first command. This behavior is very important to the child's future success. Everyone must obey laws and rules for the good of all. Adults must follow directions not only in work situations but in other pursuits as well. If a child

will not comply with parent requests at an early age, he/she is likely to also have a hard time working with others in the real, adult world. Defiance is usually accomplished by negativism and irresponsibility.

2. I said only nice things. This behavior will help the child develop a positive attitude. It leads to acceptance by others and will improve the child's self concept. A positive attitude or saying only nice things creates a pleasant atmosphere where we can live and work happily. It is well know that a positive attitude is related to good mental and physical health and well being. Caring, loving, and consideration for others are reflections of a positive attitude and positive verbalizations.

3. I showed respect for others.

1. Most children in trouble have little respect for others or themselves.

2. Non-respect is the most distinctive behavior of children placed in juvenile shelters, prisons and other institutions. If a child is taught respect at an early age, it will help his/her adjustment to others and open up more opportunities for happiness and positive social interaction.

3. This is another behavior that distinguishes a person with good mental health.

4. I was in bed by 8:00 each school night.

1. Children need rest so that they will not be fatigued the next school day. Parents also need a rest from their children. If a child does not get enough rest he/she will become cranky, irritable and will lack attention and concentration in school.

2. It will also be harder to achieve the other behaviors or rules on the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record if this rule is not carried out.

3 The parent must arrange his/her own schedule to see that it's possible for the child to be in bed by 8:00 o'clock. In doing so both parent and child take responsibility for getting to bed on time.

4. As a child grows older, past age 10, the parent can increase the time the child stays up.

5. I completed all my chores. This behavior teaches responsibility, an important correlate of maturity and good mental health. Chores should be appropriate to the child's age and ability. This rule teaches the child that everyone in the family has responsibilities. It also indirectly reinforces appropriate socialization as the child is

rewarded for doing what was expected of him/her. By giving the child responsibility at an early age we are paving the way for assuming responsibility in the real, adult world. Responsibility is a highly prized characteristic in the real world, and is positively correlated with good mental health. Responsible individuals often feel better about themselves and their ability to set and achieve goals in many aspects of life.

Training the Parents

The model provides instruction in the use of the PCAR by handout and discussion. Teachers and counselors can teach a parent how to use the model in one session. Two or three follow-up sessions over a three to five week period will help to consistently use the program.

Parents are instructed to chart the home behavior of their child over a four week period, using an ABAB behavior design. Detailed instructions are given to the parent, outlining each step of the procedure.

Procedural Handout Description. The handout given to the parents is presented verbatim below.

How to Use the PCAR

Phase I. Count every day for 5 days, Monday through Friday, the number of times the child breaks one of the 5

rules on the PCAR. Start counting from the time you get up until 8:00 p.m. Count only when the child is in the home. In other words, make sure you count the rule breaking during the same time period each day in the home. When your child breaks one of the rules, put a check mark by that rule. If your child has a high frequency of breaking all the rules, you may just want to count the first one or two rules. If necessary, use a wrist golf counter. Do not under any circumstances, implement the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record during Phase I. At the end of the fifth day, tally up and record the totals for each behavior for the past 5 days.

Phase II. Implement the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program for 5 consecutive days; Monday through Friday. Again, as in Phase I, make sure it is implemented during the same time periods and place (home) for all your observations. At the end of the fifth day, total up the number of times the child broke each rule over the past five days. Now subtract the totals for each behavior from Phase II from the totals of each behavior in Phase I. You will clearly see an improvement. This should motivate you to continue this procedure. At last you are on your way to successfully managing your child and making your home a happy, pleasant, peaceful place.

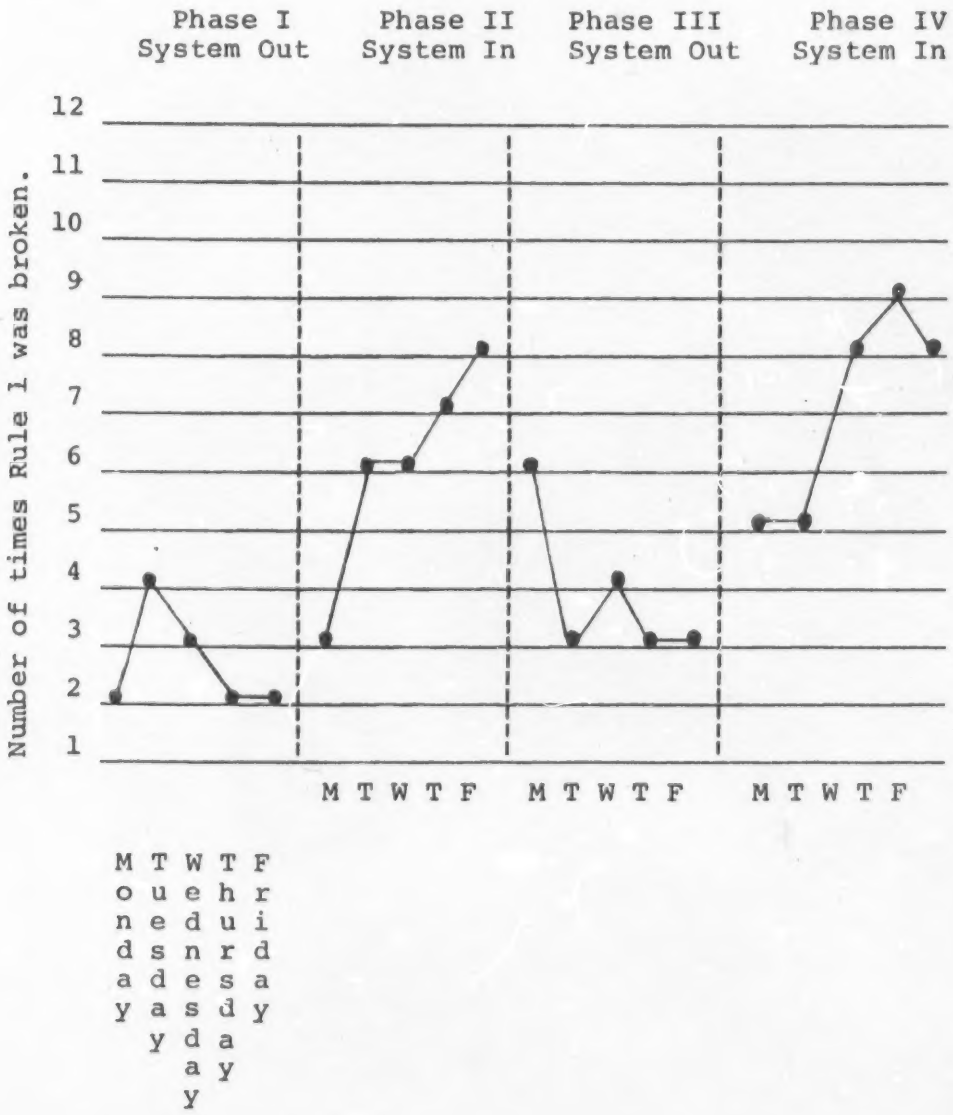
Do not expect behavior to completely change in a short time. Your child will have to practice responding with these new behaviors until they become habit and he/she sees that these new behaviors bring forth desirable attentions, responses, rewards, and good feelings about him/herself.

Suppose you are doubtful that it was the system that brought about an improvement in your child's behavior. If you are, do the following as described in Phases III and IV.

Phase III. Stop doing the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program for five (5) days, Monday through Friday. Count the times your child breaks one of the five rules the same way you did in Phase I. Total up and record the number of times your child broke each rule for the past five days.

Phase IV. Now put the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program back into effect for five (5) consecutive days, Monday through Friday, the same way you did in Phase II. At the end of five days, count the number of times the child broke each rule for the five days. Subtract the totals from each rule in this phase from the totals from each rule in Phase III. You will notice a difference if you have been consistent in applying the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program.

Now graph the information from all four phases as depicted below and you will have scientifically demonstrated the effect of the system. Example of Graphing:



Once you have graphed the data you will see that whenever you implement the system, your child's behavior improves. The more you use the system, the better you will become at using it. Your child management effectiveness will increase as a result of using the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program.

If you are not getting changes, the reason may be one or more of the following:

1. You have not identified privileges or rewards that are important or meaningful to your child.

2. You are not being consistent in applying the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program.

3. You are not using the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program as described in the directions.

4. You are not going over the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program with your child each night.

5. Your child is out of control to the point where you should seek professional help.

Specific Directions for the Parent, Parents or Guardians

The following are the main points to include in a family discussion, introducing the Parent-Child Accomplishment Program:

1. There is a better way to get along at home without nagging.

2. The new program will help everyone understand exactly what he is expected to do.

3. There are five rules that are to be followed regularly. Review the PCAR and go over each rule.

4. Privileges and rewards can be earned by following the rules. Clearly define the rules with the child and family.

5. Explain the point system. Show how the child can earn points to exchange for privileges and rewards. Also show the child that marks placed on the form each time an infraction of the rule occurs, mean points will be lost.

6. Remind the child that points will be totaled each night and he or she can write down the points earned that day.

7. Let the child suggest about six or seven privileges and rewards with appropriate points to be earned. For example, bowling - 50 points; a slumber party - 500 points, etc.

8. Explain that bonus points can be earned for being especially helpful or nice to others.

9. Show how the daily points earned are computed for the week and explain how these points can be exchanged or saved for a bigger privilege or reward.

10. Clarify that time out is to be used when the child breaks the rule three consecutive times. The first infraction will result in five minutes of time out (in the laundry room or bethroom) and two minutes of time out will result for each minute of argument or delay.

When the child breaks a rule on the Parent Child Accomplishment Program, be sure to immediately place a dot on the appropriate block or square for that day. This is important because you want the child to see the relationship between his/her behavior and its consequences. When placing the dot on the chart, inform the child what rule has been broken. (Optional: You may have the child place the dot.)

When the child breaks the same rule three times in a row, tell him or her to go to time out. If he/she complains or refuses, tell him/her that he/she will have to spend an additional two minutes in time out. If the child still doesn't go into time out after a minute has elasped, tell the child that another two minutes have been added to time out. If after doing this three times and the child has still not gone into time out, you have one of two options:

OPTION 1: The child can be told that he/she has just lost a designated privilege for that day and will have to go to bed right after supper, or

OPTION 2: The child can be told on the third request that he/she will be paddled and put into time out if he/

she doesn't go to time out voluntarily within the next 15 seconds.

Option 2 is not a desirable option but some children have to be confronted and shown that there is an authority who will control them if they cannot control themselves. This option is the hardest for both the parent and child. If option 2 is elected, the parent must try to be calm during the procedure.

If the child tries to come out of time out, a wedge can be placed under the door or the door may be held to keep him/her in time out. If the child screams or hollers, tell him/her that two additional minutes have been added for that behavior. It is very important that you do what you say you will do in this circumstance. A few minutes may be required to enforce the time out extension, but it will show the child that you intend to do whatever it takes to obtain cooperation.

If the child requires option 2 (a child who does what he wants; has little respect for you), patience and courage will be needed to follow through. If the parent gives in, the child learns that he ultimately has control; he will be harder to train the next time around. Usually after two or three uses of option two, the child will know that you

mean business and will follow your requests in the future to go to time out.

It is critical that the parent remain firm, calm, and loving when correcting the child and when implementing time out. The child's cries, threats, etc., must not be used to manipulate the parent. Children's threats and words are not true indications of their behaviors.

Specifics about the time out area

The time out area should be devoid of stimulation. A laundry room or bathroom where there is relatively little to see or do would be appropriate. Make sure all medications or hazardous products are removed. The main idea behind time out is to remove the child to an area devoid of stimulation and entertainment.

Bedrooms do not usually work well as time out areas because the child can play with toys or jump on the bed. Having the child sit in a chair near you can be annoying because often children will make sounds. It is best to remove the child from the family's main area.

Option 2 should not be used for children age 13 or older. Deprive these children of privileges, e.g. going out on Friday or Saturday night, missing ball games, etc.

Summary

This model which uses the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record is a viable, effective and efficient way for parents to manage the home behavior of their exceptional children. Because of its design, the negative approach to management often used by parents is replaced with a more rational and consistent method of disciplining their children. Less stress and strife should exist in homes following implementation of the model. Relationships with children ought to become more positive, loving, trusting, and mutually respectful as a result of implementing the Parent-Child Accomplishment Record.

Appendix A

MONTH _____

WEEK OF _____

PARENT/CHILD
ACCOMPLISHMENT RECORD FOR

_____

_____

RULES	SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT	TOTAL
1. I followed all directions given to me on the first command. (No excuses permitted) (10) 1 point subtracted for each failure to follow direction.								
2. I said only nice things. (10)								
3. I showed respect for others. (10)								
4. Each school night I was in bed by 8:00 p.m. (10)								
5. I completed my chores. (10)								
6. BONUS POINTS								
DAILY TOTAL								GRAND TOTAL

PRIVILEGES/REWARDS TO BE DETERMINED BY CHILD AND PARENT TOGETHER

_____ _____

_____ _____

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